

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**historic name Douglass, Frederick, High School

other names/site number

B-4210

**2. Location**street & number 1601 North Calhoun StreetN/A ☐ not for publicationcity, town Baltimore☐ vicinitystate Marylandcode MD

county independent city code

510zip code 21212**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

☐ private☒ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

11002

Noncontributing

0 buildings0 sites0 structures0 objects0 Total

name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the NationalRegister. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the

National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

B-4210

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

VACANT/not in use

**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival

foundation brick

walls brick

limestone

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Completed in 1924, the old Frederick Douglass High School is a free-standing building with an adjacent playground area occupying nearly three quarters of the city block bounded by Calhoun, Cumberland, Carey and Baker streets in Baltimore, Maryland. It sets within a residential neighborhood of three-story row houses known as Sandtown-Winchester and is located two blocks west of Pennsylvania Avenue. The building is primarily a large three-story brick masonry structure with a flat roof. The three primary facades, exhibiting the stylistic details of Late Gothic Revival design, are punctuated by regularly displayed classroom fenestration framed in stone "quoins," have entries defined with shallow stone pointed arches and are capped by a brick parapet broken with stone battlements. The school is roughly square in plan with classrooms arranged about the perimeter of a centrally placed auditorium. Interior finishes and detailing are simple. Floors are either wood or terrazo and the walls and ceilings are typically painted plaster. The original window sashes are missing in many areas. The interior plans and decorative detailing remain essentially intact to the 1920s. On the back of the property is a circa 1880 four story brick building which was renovated and incorporated into the school when the larger building was erected. Additions were made in the 1950s and 1970s. To the north, extending from the high school building to Cumberland Street, is a paved playground area.

**8. Statement of Significance**

B-4210

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locallyApplicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☒ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Period of Significance

1923-1954

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Owens and Sisco, Architects

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The old Frederick Douglass High School at 1601 North Calhoun Street is significant for its association with the development of quality instruction for black children within the Baltimore City public school system. Built in 1923-1924, it is the first public high school building in the city, and believed to be the first in the state of Maryland, specifically erected for blacks and was the only secondary school in the Baltimore area that could be attended by black students through the 1930s. In its provision of space for "lower" vocational training and classrooms for "higher" academic pursuit, the building's design embodied what was the prevailing philosophy toward black education of the period. The building is characterized by an elaborately decorated exterior, though somewhat plainer than the standard Baltimore school of the period, with a simple interior plan and decorative detailing. It remained as a "colored" high school until 1954 when the Baltimore school system adopted the desegregation policy of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision and the high school was moved to another location.

☒ See continuation sheet for

HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

B-4210

Annual reports of Board of School Commissioners, Afro-American vertical files in the Maryland Room, Microfilm files of Evening Sun and Afro American Newspapers all located at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD.

Photographic documentation from the City Buildings Survey, 1926-27 located at the Peale Museum, Baltimore, MD.

Historic Maps of the City of Baltimore by Topographical Survey Commission located at the offices of Baltimore City's Historical and Architectural Preservation Commission, 118 N. Howard Street, Baltimore, MD.

Dr. Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, Chair of Department of History, Coppin State College, Baltimore, MD.

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 2.98 acres

USGS quad Baltimore West, MD

UTM References

A 18 358440 4352000

Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheet No. 10.1

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Property consists of Baltimore City lot on which it has always stood.

☐ See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mark R. Heckman

organization David S. Shull AIA, Architects date June 8, 1988

street & number 518 S. Hanover Street telephone 301-332-0128

city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21201

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Baltimore, Maryland

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Section number 7 Page 1GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Completed in 1924, the school is primarily a three story masonry structure with a flat roof. Because the site slopes away from north to south, it has three full levels above grade and a partial ground floor along Baker Street. Its primary entrance oriented west to Calhoun Street, the school is roughly square in plan, enveloping a previously constructed two and four story masonry building located on the Carey Street (east) side. These structures were renovated in 1923 as part of the building of the new high school. To the north, extending from the high school to Cumberland Street, is a paved outdoor area used as the school's playground.

Frederick Douglass High School exhibits the stylistic detailing of a Late Gothic Revival influence commonly known as "collegiate gothic style." The building is approximately nine bays wide and eight bays deep, reflecting the internal concrete post and beam structural system. A medium tone red brick laid in a common running bond pattern punctuated by fenestration regularly displaced in the bays makes up the body of the elevations. Stylistic detailing common to the gothic style are concentrated primarily at the building's entrances and exit stair locations. The central bay of the principal, west, facade is projected slightly; the four main entry doors are surrounded by a heavy, shallow pointed arch "buttressed" on each side by setback "buttresses" extending up to the parapet. Above the doors, to the underside of the arch, is simple wood tracery forming lancet shaped lites. This same composition motif is repeated at the exit doors of the fire stairs on the side (north and south) elevations. In contrast to the brick of the main body of the building, almost the entire assemblage at the door locations is faced with dressed limestone. Many of the original 12/12 wooden double-hung sashes are missing.

The projecting two end bays of the principal facade are blind except for the top floor fenestration. Double hung windows are typically combined in groups of four or five within a bay and framed with jambs consisting of alternating small and large limestone blocks in a quoinwise fashion. Each window within the group is typically separated by a slender engaged wood column. Three belt courses of limestone form the ground floor window lintel, the first floor window sill, and the first floor window lintel. Above the third floor windows there is a limestone cornice; a brick parapet surmounts the cornice and has a limestone coping. The parapet is broken by "battlements" demarcating the structural bays. The overall effect of the elevations with the limestone banding, cornice and cap, and the horizontal grouping of the windows, gives the building a heavy overall horizontal impression.



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The east facade fronting Carey Street, unlike the unified design of the other elevations, reflect the assemblage of existing buildings, the two gymnasium masses of the building proper, and the three additions. All are, however, red brick buildings and because of their relatively small scale, do not compromise the school's historic integrity. Besides the structure renovated in 1923 previously discussed, a semi-detached one story music building was added in 1953 and semi-detached vocational shop building was completed in 1974 directly northeast of the building proper.

The floor plan is symmetrical in composition about the east-west axis. A large auditorium is located at the very center of the building while the classrooms and laboratories are arranged about the perimeter. Open air courtyards separate the mass of the auditorium (north and south sides) from the classrooms allowing natural light through windows of both. The 1800 seat auditorium, entered directly from the foyer of the building's main entrance, contains a balcony, a stage with orchestra pit and wooden seats with metal sides detailed with a gothic tracery pattern. The pilasters and panel composition of the auditorium walls, as with the ceiling, are finished in painted plaster. The entry foyer has a plaster groin vaulted ceiling and is finished with a marble wainscote. A wide corridor with terrazo floors inscribes a basic square circulation pattern within the building. At the four outside corners of the corridor are located interior stairways connecting the floors and leading directly to outside entrances. Between the stairs locations are the classrooms, offices and laboratories opening off both sides of the corridor.

Situated at the northeast and southeast corners of the school are the two-story high gymnasiums, one for each, boys and girls. Set between the two gymnasiums, accessed by the east corridor, are located the older structures and the music room addition. At the north end of the east hall on the first floor, a corridor extension leading to the shop building is provided.

The interior finishes and details are simple. The classroom floors are wood with linoleum tile; walls and ceilings are finished in plaster. There are plain wood baseboards and plain wood surrounds at openings. Original classroom panel doors have been replaced with flush wood doors. Stairways have a terrazo floor, plaster walls and ceiling and a singular metal pipe handrail. The entrance foyer has marble paneled walls and a groin vaulted ceiling. The auditorium interior is decorated with plaster pilasters, panels, dentiling, coffered ceiling, ware molding, and bolection molding bordering the rectangular prosienium opening and shows extreme deterioration.

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Vandalism has occurred in recent years but has been mostly limited to the removal of copper wiring and the breakage of window glass, the latter exposing the interior to the weather and thus accelerating interior plaster deterioration throughout the building.

The exterior, on the other hand is particularly well preserved, excepting that the majority of the original double hung wood windows with 12/12 lites were replaced with aluminum windows (of which only the metal frames remain) and the original wood panel entry and exit doors have been replaced with flush metal doors. Window openings in the gymnasiums have been filled solid with brick masonry, its color approximating the original brick.

The exterior and interior retain integrity of the historic character (plan, decorative detailing) of the building as constructed in 1923-1924.

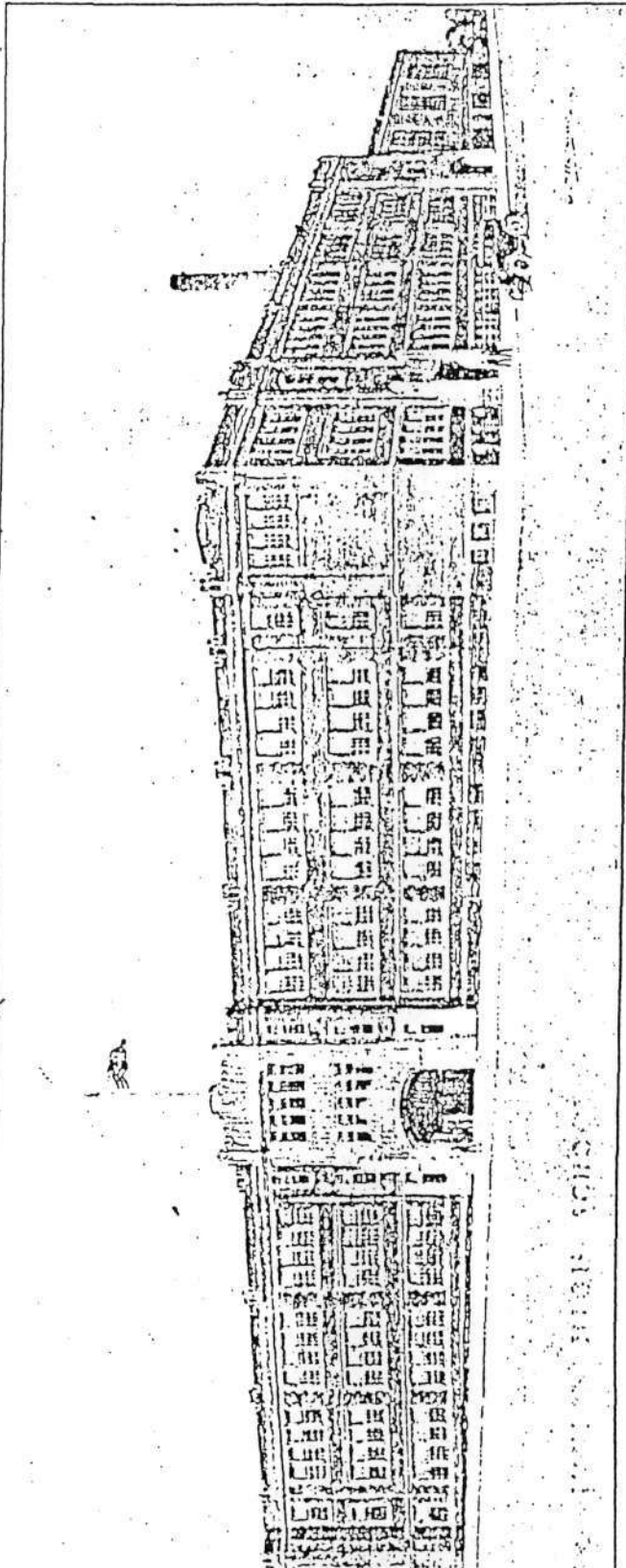
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Douglass, Frederick, High School  
Baltimore, Maryland

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DOUGLASS SENIOR-JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (COLORED)

CAREY and BAKER STREETS

One of the finest High Schools in America for Colored Students

Capacity 2300

Coeducational

Course in Institutional Cooking

Contract Price—\$1,142,000

Separate Shop Building

See Continuation  
Sheet No. 7.5



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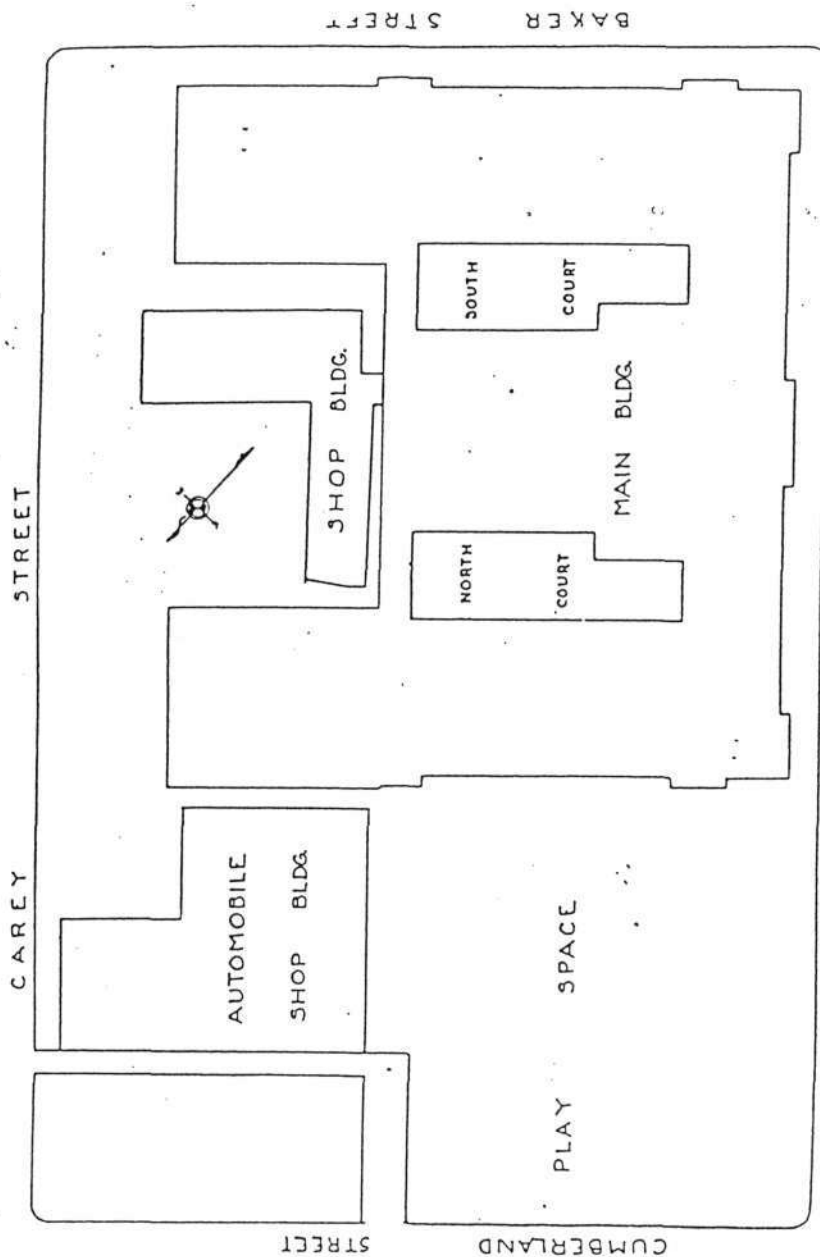
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reprinted from  
Report of the Board of School Commissioners  
1925 p. 69



3A-JA HIGH SCHOOL FOR COLORED STUDENTS  
Frederick Douglass High School—Plat of Lot and Buildings

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.6

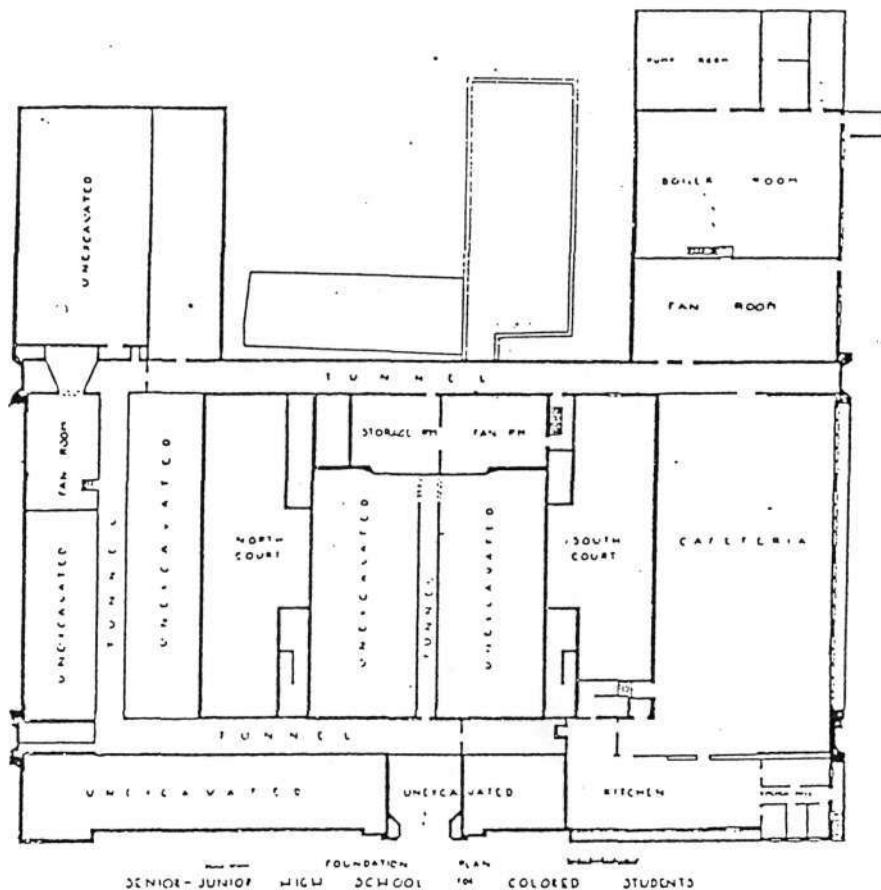
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Frederick Douglass High School  
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.7

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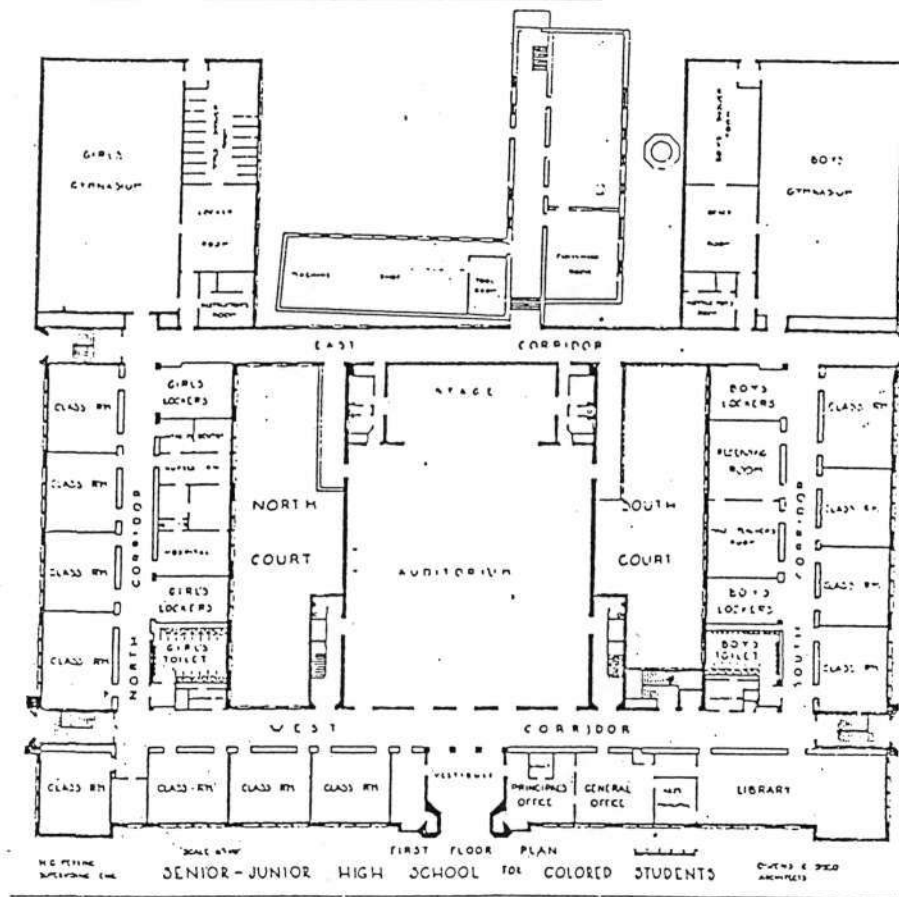
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Reprinted from 1925 Report of the Board of School Commissioners, pp. 70- 73.



Frederick Douglass High School  
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.8

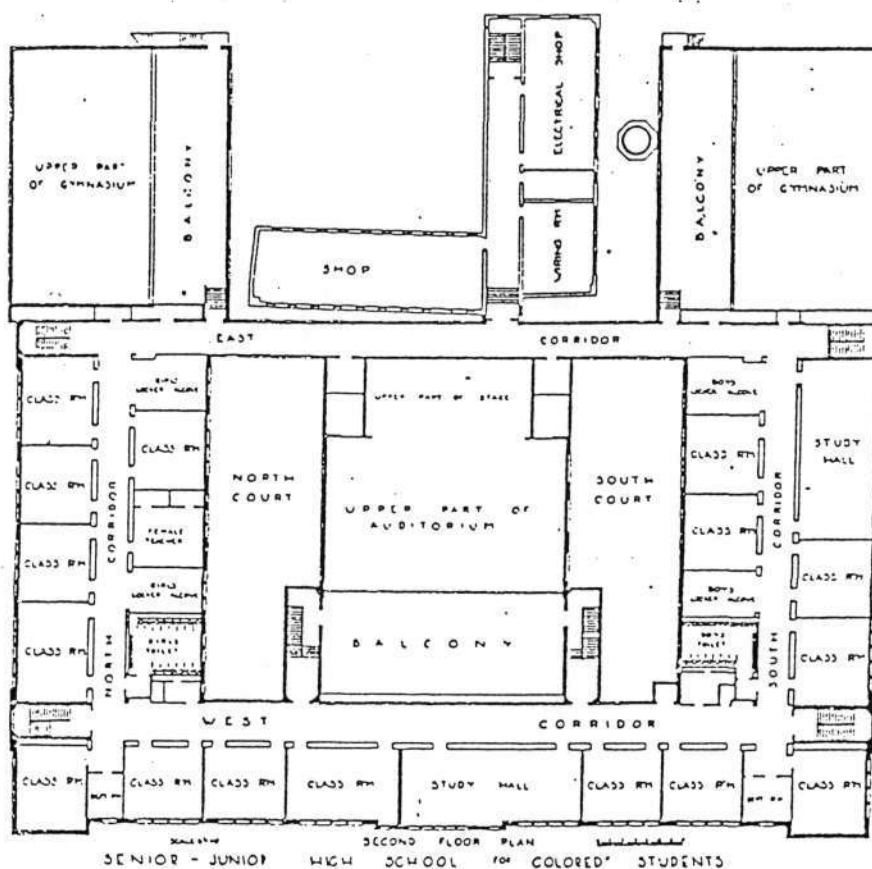
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Frederick Douglass High School  
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.9

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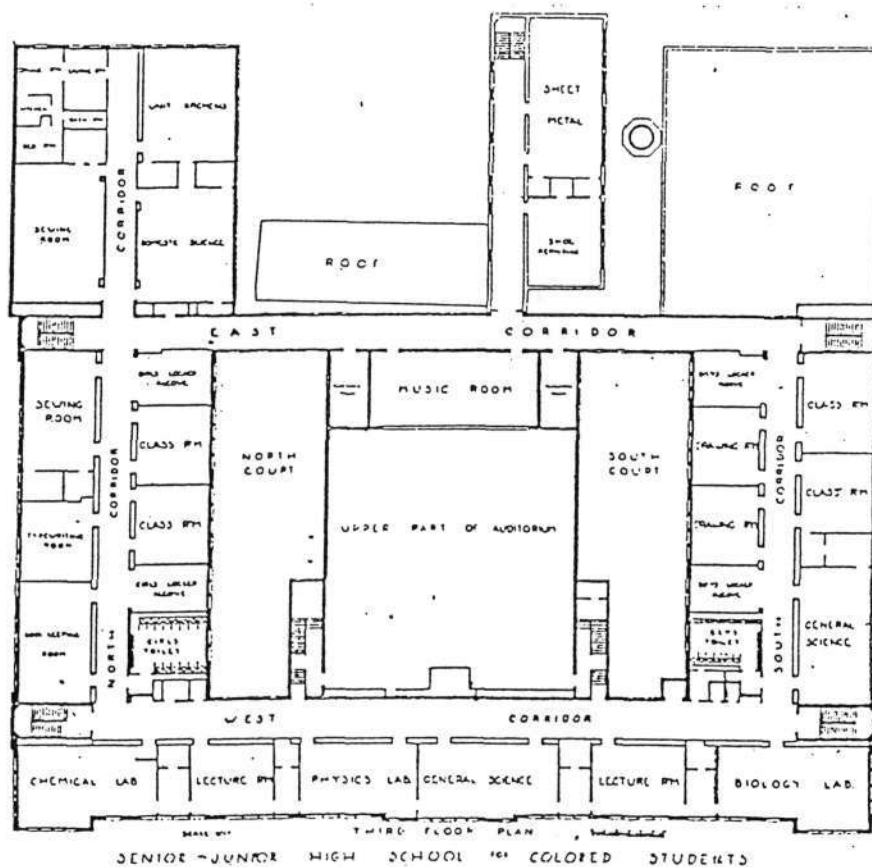
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Reprinted from 1925 Report of the Board of School Commissioners, pp. 70- 73



Frederick Douglass High School  
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.10



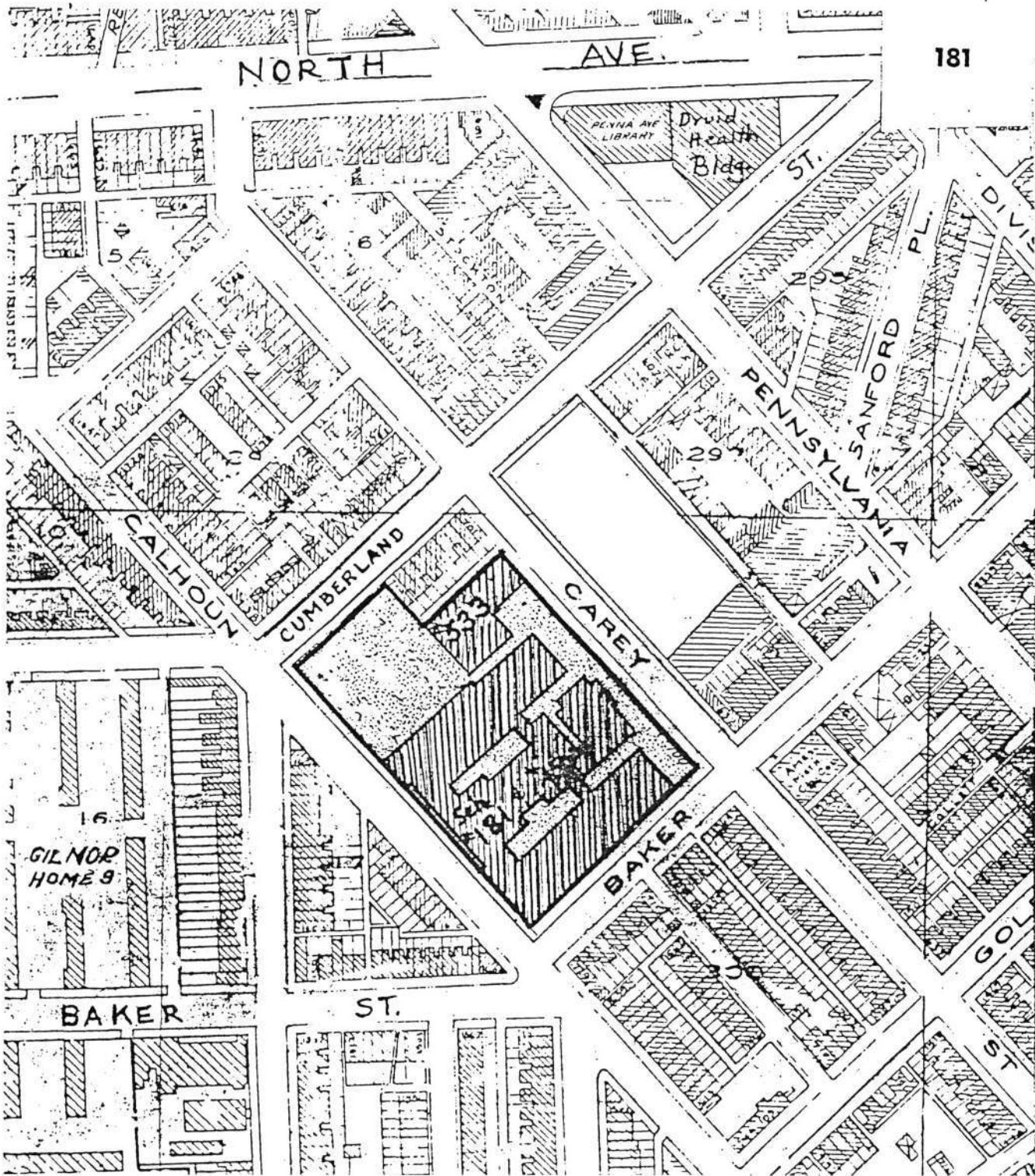
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HISTORIC CONTEXT

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance 1870-1930

Modern Period 1930-present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Education

Architecture

Resource Type:

Category: building

Historic Environment: urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): EDUCATION/school

Known Design Source: Owens and Sisco, Architects

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Section number 8 Page 2HISTORIC CONTEXT

During the 1920s, Baltimore was the most influential section of Maryland. It was the state hub for railways, manufacturing, banking, insurance, law, medicine, and education. The city of Baltimore comprised 51 percent of the state's population during this period<sup>1</sup> and unlike the smaller towns of the state, it was a city composed of ethnic neighborhoods, each of which was moving out along a radial path from the center of the city. Nearly half the black population was living in the northwest sector, packed close around Pennsylvania Avenue and Dolphin Street; an area that included most of the city's black home owners, the professionals, the dealers, and the highest share of the literate and youthful.<sup>2</sup> The urban concentration, relative wealth and political mobilization of the black<sup>3</sup> community in the northwest ghetto was influential in city politics.<sup>3</sup>, securing the location of a new "colored" school when the city embarked on an impressive new school building program after WWI. There was no pretense of equal accommodation; segregation was complete in the schools and remained so until 1954 when the city and the state were the first in the nation to implement the decision of the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision.<sup>4</sup>

The Frederick Douglass High School stands as a monument to the educational aspirations and activism of Afro-Americans in the city of Baltimore and the state of Maryland. The building is also symbolic because it continues to represent for all citizens of Baltimore and the state that facility which served as the fertile ground from which many of Baltimore's and the state's black leadership emerged. It also bears the name, beginning in 1923, of one of the nation's leading spokesmen for civil and human rights, Frederick Douglass.

Standing in the midst of a predominantly black community, once renovated and occupied the building can again foster feelings of pride and achievement. It is noteworthy that the building represents the first educational physical plant with adequate space and design for high school students erected specifically for Afro-Americans in Baltimore.

In 1885, the Colored High School, the original name of Douglass Senior High, with a principal and several assistants, had become a separate unit within the High and Grammar School on Holliday Street, where the Peale Museum now stands. In 1897, a separate building was erected for the advanced students, but in 1901 the school was relocated at Pennsylvania Avenue and Dolphin streets; it included a normal and polytechnic department. In November 1909 the training

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school was separated from the high school. Dr. Mason A. Hawkins, a Douglass graduate, served as the principal of the high school from 1909 to 1934. As late as 1920, Frederick Douglass High School and Booker T. Washington Junior High School provided the only training beyond the elementary level for Afro-Americans residing in Baltimore and the immediate area. Youngsters throughout the state travelled to Baltimore to attend Douglass. In 1901, thirteen persons graduated from the high school. Hawkins, as one of his last duties as principal, presided over commencement exercises for 209 seniors. The number of graduates has increased yearly. In time, the academic standards of the school and the qualifications and commitment of the teachers and the administrators earned for Douglass national recognition for its academic excellence.

Community and educational groups such as the Alumni Association of the Colored High School, the Civic Aid Association, and the Defense League began as early as 1902 to petition for a new physical plant for Douglass. However, it was not until 1925 that the facility was erected at Calhoun and Baker streets. The building contained an auditorium, music room, gymnasium for boys and girls, and classrooms. Adequate space was also provided for auxiliary offices; the industrial arts program was housed in an adjacent building. Harry T. Pratt, another Douglass alumnus, served as principal through 1940. The building was used during the day, and at night served as the educational center for those unable to attend the day program. Douglass was also used as a center for community, cultural, and related educational activities during the evening and the summers. The high school remained at this site until 1954 when it was relocated to another location. The building continued to serve as a school and housed Douglass students from 1981 to 1984 while the present school underwent renovation.

The history of Douglass Senior High School and the building at Calhoun and Baker streets is a long and rich one. It is in many ways reflective of the struggles and triumphs of the black citizens of Baltimore, the state of Maryland and the nation. Because the attainment of a good education remains in the eyes of many as one key component for success, it is indeed fitting that a building which represents in part that thrust be designated a historic site.

Following is a list of some of the prominent Black Americans who graduated from old Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore. This



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list was prepared by the office of Dr. Cynthia Neverdon Morton, History Professor at Coppin State College, Baltimore.

Person	Profession	Year Attended/ Graduated
Cab Calloway	Singer, Jazz Musician	Attended 1924-27; received diploma 1928
Ethel Ennis	Jazz Singer	Graduated 1950
Thurgood Marshall	U.S. Supreme Court Justice	Graduated 1925
Parran J. Mitchell	Former U.S. Congressman	Graduated 1940
Juanita Jackson Mitchell	Renowned Attorney & Civic Leader	Graduated 1927
Avon Long	International Dancer	Attended 1925-1927; did not graduate
Veronica Tyler	Renowned Opera Singer	Attended mid 1950s; graduated Peabody 1960
Henry Parker	Treasurer, State of Connecticut	Graduated 1946
Carl Murphy	Founder of the Afro- American Newspaper	Graduated 1907

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> George H. Callcott, Maryland & America 1940-1989, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Sherry H. Olson, Baltimore, The Building of an American City, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> Olson, pp. 276-277; also see page 328.

<sup>4</sup> Callcott, pp. 151-152.



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"Baltimore Schools Must Be Designed To Keep Pace With Commercial and Industrial Growth", Baltimore Municipal Journal, April 27, 1927.

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Callcott, George H., Maryland & America 1940- 1980, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Field, Isaac S., "Report of the President of the Board of School Commissioners", Baltimore Board of School Commissioners Annual Report, for years 1920- 1926.

"First Black Postsecondary School", Maryland Historical Magazine, 73: 1978, p. 173.

Hawkins, Mason, Frederick Douglass High School A Seventeen Year Period Survey, Thesis in Education, Graduate School University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1933.

"New Building Stands Idle While Old One is Crowded to the Doors", Baltimore Afro-American, Feb. 25, 1925.

Oliver, Elizabeth M., "Douglass High School marks 100th year birthday in 1983", Baltimore Afro-American, Sept. 10, 1983.

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Perring, H.G. "New Douglass High School to be Opened This Year." Baltimore Municipal Journal, Vol XIII, No. 5, 10 March 1925.

Schoettler, Carl, "10,000 Old Grads Expected For Douglass Centennial Ball at Convention Center", The Evening Sun, Oct. 13, 1983.

Sylvester, Charles W., "Vocational Education Provided by Public Schools", Baltimore Municipal Journal, Mar. 10, 1927.

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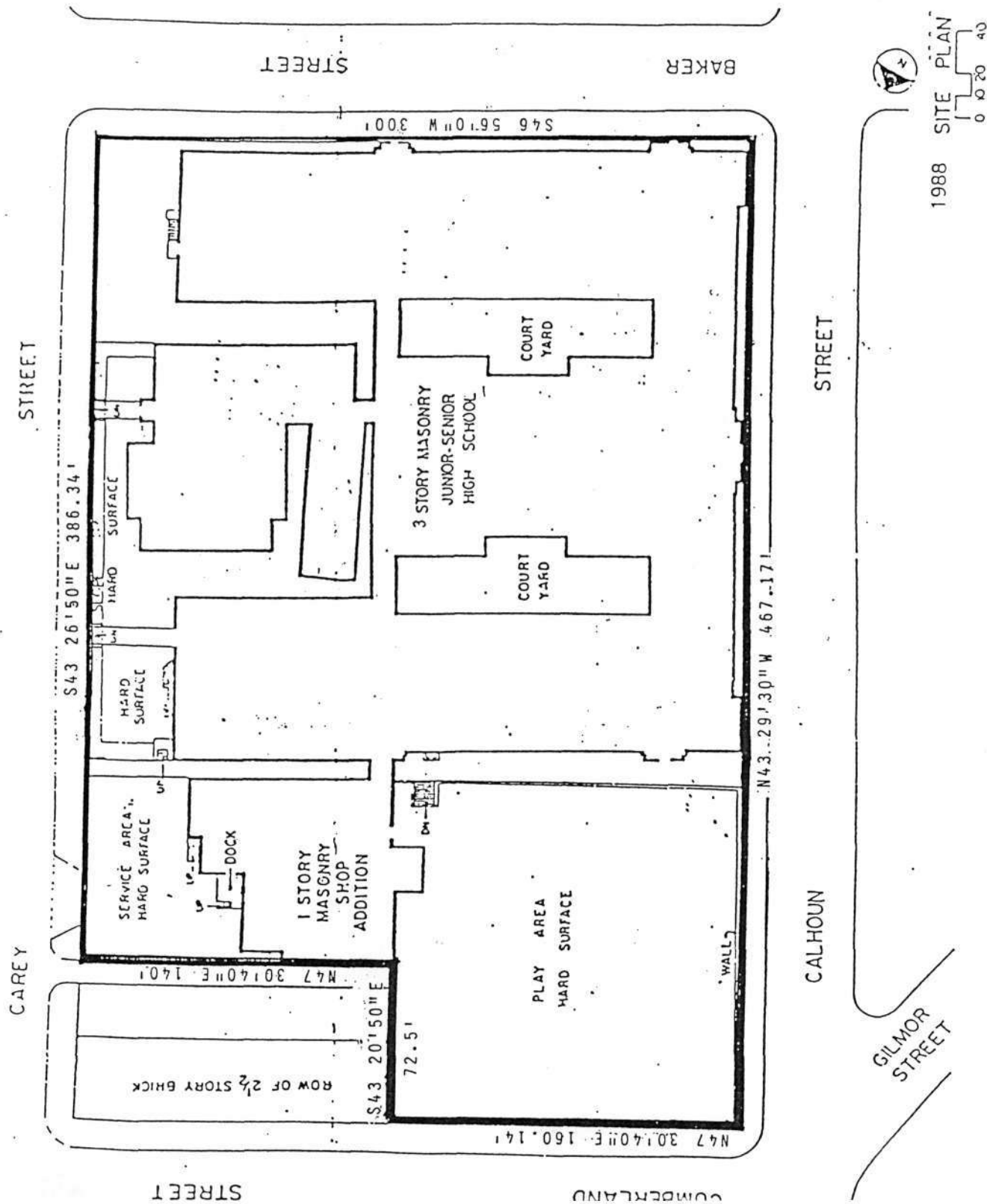
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Douglass,  
Frederick,  
High School

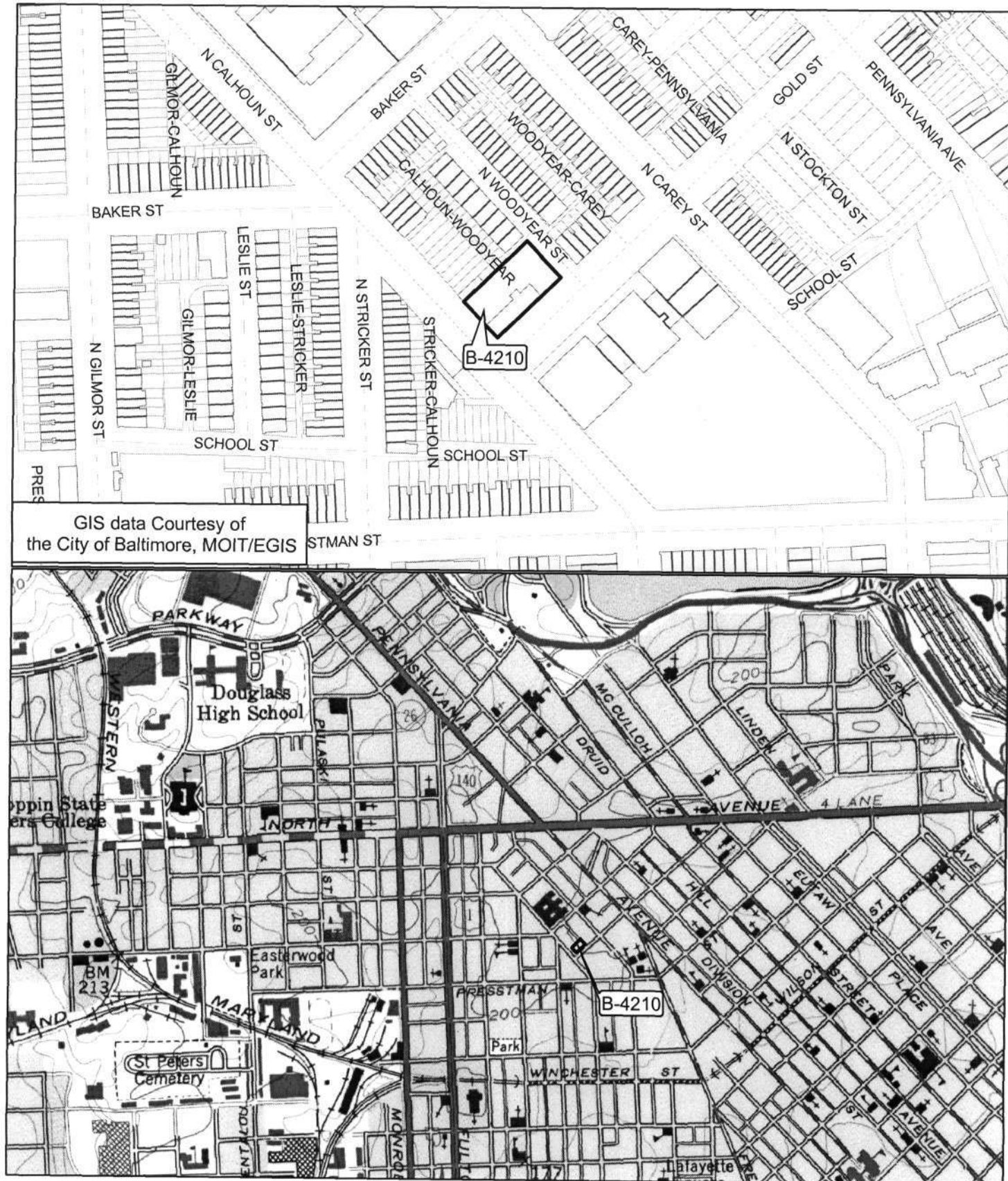
B-4210

Baltimore  
Maryland

18/358440/  
4352000



B-4210  
Frederick Douglass High School  
1601 N. Calhoun Street  
Block 0300C Lot 006  
Baltimore City  
Baltimore West Quad.







DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

WEST (FRONT) ELEVATION

B-4210



DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6-88

MARYLAND SHPO

SOUTH ELEVATION



DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

NORTH ELEV.

B-4210





DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

EAST (REAR) ELEVATION

[VIEW OF S.E. CORNER]

B-4210



DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

B-4210

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

ENTRY FOYER



DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

D-4210

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6-88

MARYLAND SHPO

TYP. CLASSROOM





DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

B-4210

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

TRP. CORRIDOR (2<sup>ND</sup> FLR.)



DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND SHPO

AUDITORIUM

B-4210





DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

B-4210

BALTIMORE, MD.

DAVID S SHULL AIA ARCHITECTS

6/88

MARYLAND, SHPO

AUDITORIUM



SCHOOL FOR W. C. C. C. COLORED HIGH. CALHOUN & BAKER STS. 1921

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL  
BALTIMORE, MD

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CREDIT LINE:

THE PEABODY MUSEUM, BALTIMORE

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form without the express permission of the  
Board of Trustees of the museum.

225 N. Holliday Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Acc. 70.5-

(City Buildings Survey)

Colored High School, #450,

Built 1921



SCHOOL #470. COLORED HIGH SCHOOL. CALHOUN & BAKER STS.  
1921.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL  
BALTIMORE, MD.

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CHARTER LINE

THE PLAZA MUSEUM, BALTIMORE

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225 N. Holliday Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202

See, 70.5-

(City Buildings Survey, 1926-7)

Colored High School, #450





SCHOOL NO. 100. COLORED HIGH. CALHOUN & BAKER STS. 1921.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL  
BALTIMORE, MD

B-4210

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SCHOOL FOR COLORED PEOPLE, CALHOUN & BAKER STS. 1921

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SCHOOL #450. COLORED HIGH. CALHOUN & BAKER STS. 1921.

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